Aaron Burr vs. Alexander Hamilton: A Duel At Dawn

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I was initially undecided about a project topic, so I went to Mr. Holliday and asked his advice regarding topics that were both challenging and interesting. He recommended several and I decided upon the famous (so called) duel between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton. Although I knew nothing of this noteworthy duel and little of the duelers involved, once I heard the premise I was immediately intrigued.

I began my research solely to discover what happened during the duel, how or why anyone was wounded, and of course why it was so famous as to be later called “The Duel”. Through the Google search engine I was able to discover small home grown web pages like [www.weehawkenhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.weehawkenhistoricalsociety.org) the quaint home page of the town where the duel took place. Websites like those and others that focused on the commemoration of history like PBS’s site, [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org) proved the greatest wealth of information. Mr. Holliday even loaned me one of his personal novels, Founding Brothers, whose entire first chapter is dedicated to Burr and Hamilton’s famous duel. It was through this great collection of resources that I was able to learn the answer to my objective and much, much more, allowing me to gain a fuller understanding of my topic. The only surprise I encountered while researching was that this unheard- of- to- me confrontation was so well documented and the information surrounding it so abundant and intact after more than two hundred years.

By the end of my research, I decided that even before I could discuss the events that took place that fateful morning at Weehawken, New Jersey, I must address the many complex elements that when added together, really culminated in Burr and Hamilton’s confrontation. To do so, I had to include many different images and quips of information (if brief) that would summarize the events both after and before the actual duel; thus my PowerPoint was born. But, because my objective requires me to provide information and come to a decision about the results of the duel on the lives of its participants, I choose an accompanying handout for the class, that would allow them to take notes on the speech and make a decision as mentioned above by its conclusion. On my combined visual aid and decision reference sheet I likely spent a total of seven days time.

Finally, I would like to argue that my topic: the duel between Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, perfectly fits this unit’s theme of Challenges, if very literally at that. As I learned throughout my research, many times did Hamilton and Burr’s paths cross before Burr became so enraged by a comment made by Hamilton that referred to his “despicable character” that he finally decided to *challenge* him to the fateful duel. After accepting the challenge as he did, Hamilton faced his own set of challenges: namely death. In the same way as Hamilton, Burr was not without his own set of challenges. After inflicting Hamilton with a mortal wound, cries of “Murderer” followed Burr everywhere he went in the North. As ashamed as he was by the scorn that had befallen him, he retreated to the West, where he was to attempt to construct a country of his own, separate from the United States. He was eventually arrested and tried for treason. Throughout my research, *Challenges* seemed to be the ever present background music that played constantly, soft and slow, just loud enough to hear, haunting each scene in which our two characters appeared.

Word Count: 605